

THE SEVENTIES

Yesterday, on the food-machine patio,
the Black Panther Party held a bake sale.

EASY POEM

I just had a note from a good young writer, Rob Matte,
and I was taken with his complimentary close: "Over Easy."
All the more so since my own epistolary imagination
seldom stretches beyond, "Truly Yours Truly."

It got me to thinking about how many nice 'n easy
phrases there are: "Take it easy," "Easy does it,"
"At ease, men," "Easy come, easy go,"
"An easy guy to get along with," "Easy Street," --
I'm sure you can think of many more
that won't come to me now that I'm struggling for them.

There are, of course, those like "Easy lay" and "Easy mark"
that I never much cared for,
smacking as they do of a contemptuous ingratitude.

And some things, I suppose, will never be easy,
like getting yourself to the typewriter,
whether you be Tennessee Williams
or a freshman doing his weekend composition.
It's a little easier, though, once you get down to it,
in spite of what we grew up being told,
that there was a direct proportion between
the value of a work, and the work expended upon it.
It took me many difficult years to learn that
easy could be good, if, at least,
you had some good to start with,
and that, even when accomplished with difficulty,
the difficulty need not necessarily be passed on to the
reader.

It made things easier, reading at a certain age Field
and Bukowski,
and being at ease with Koertge and Stetler,
and, although there's only one lesson permanently learned,
I think I'll take this easy chance to thank them.